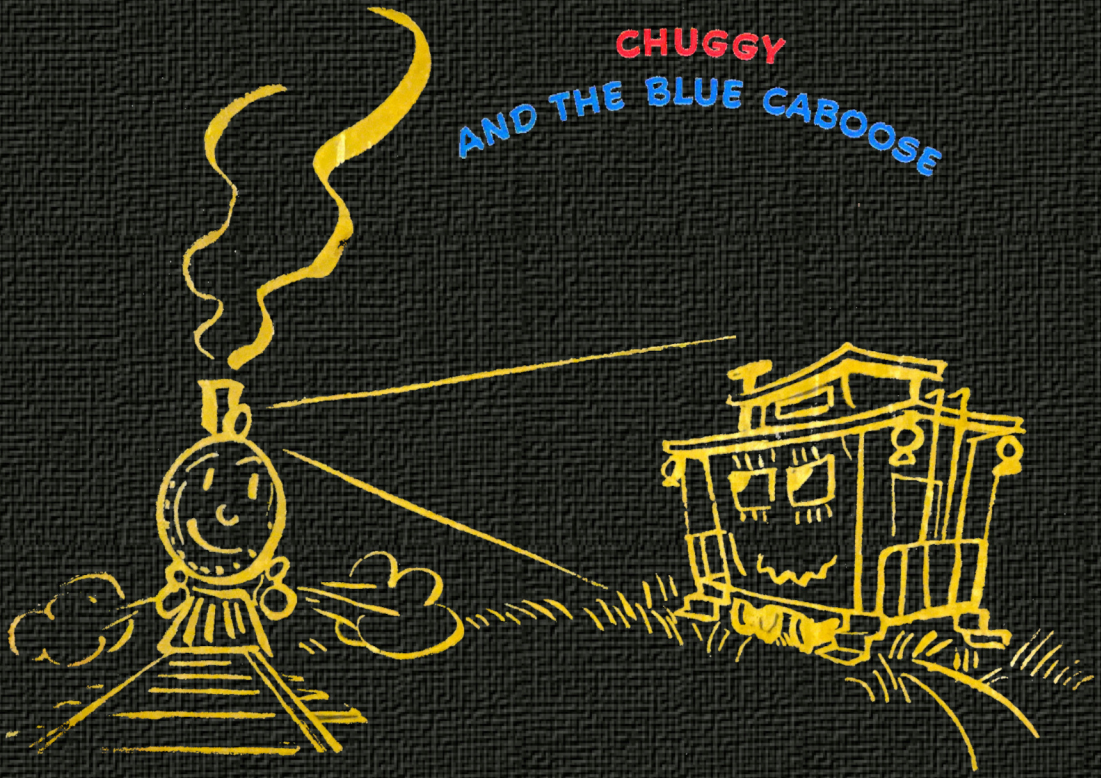
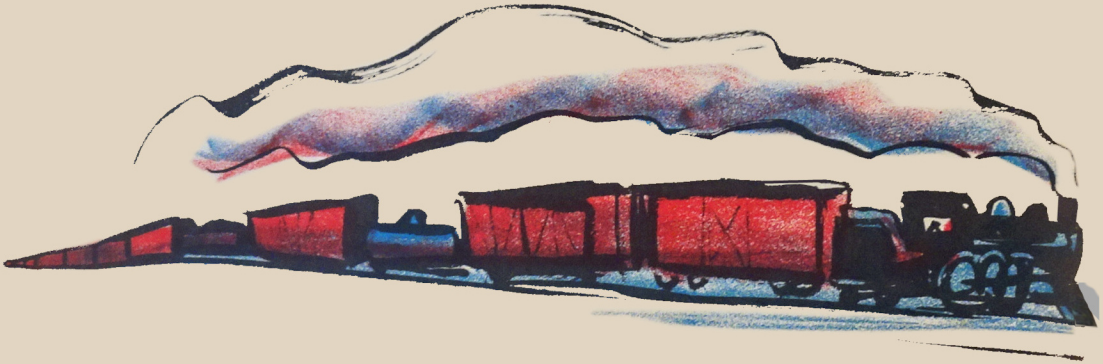
CHUGGY AND THE BLUE CABOOSE



Chuggy and the Blue Caboose

by

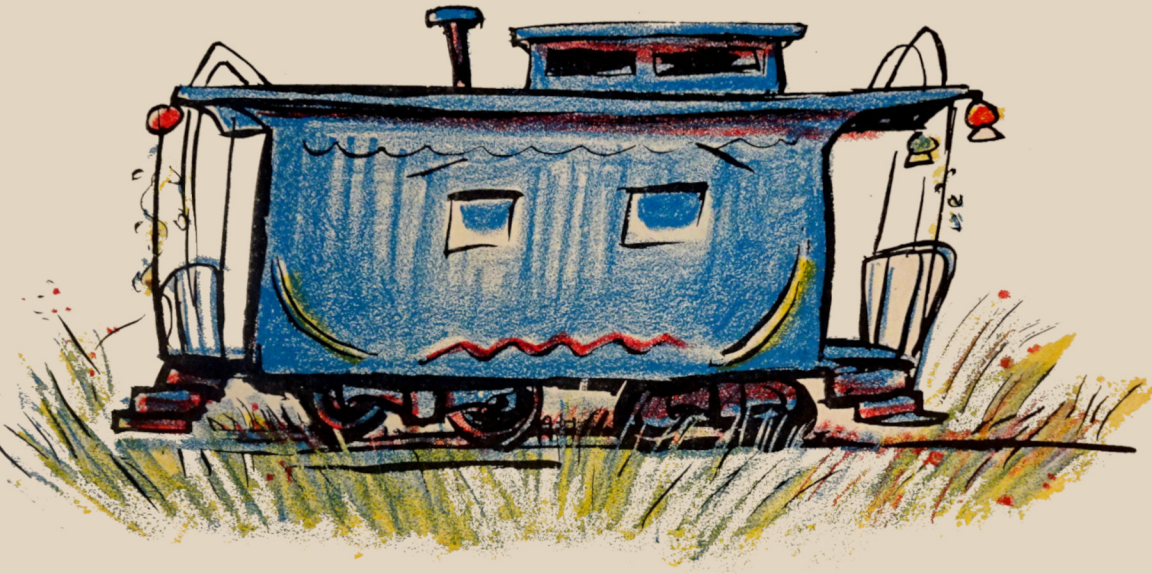
Don and Lydia Freeman



The Junior Literary Guild

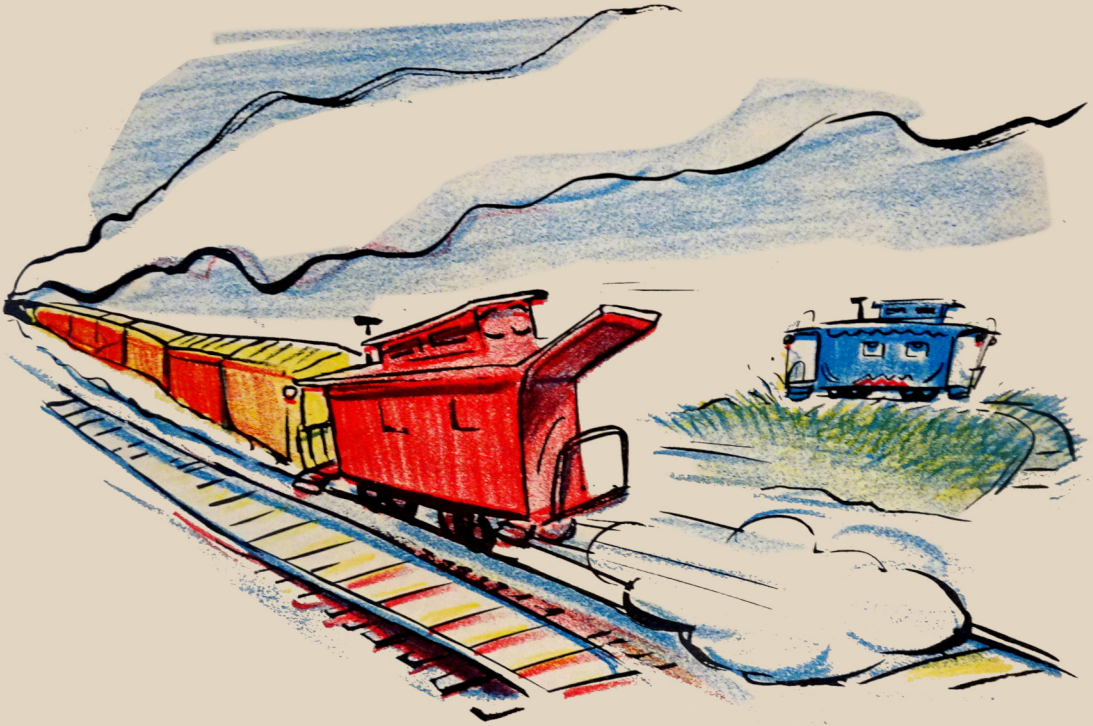
and

The Viking Press, New York 1951

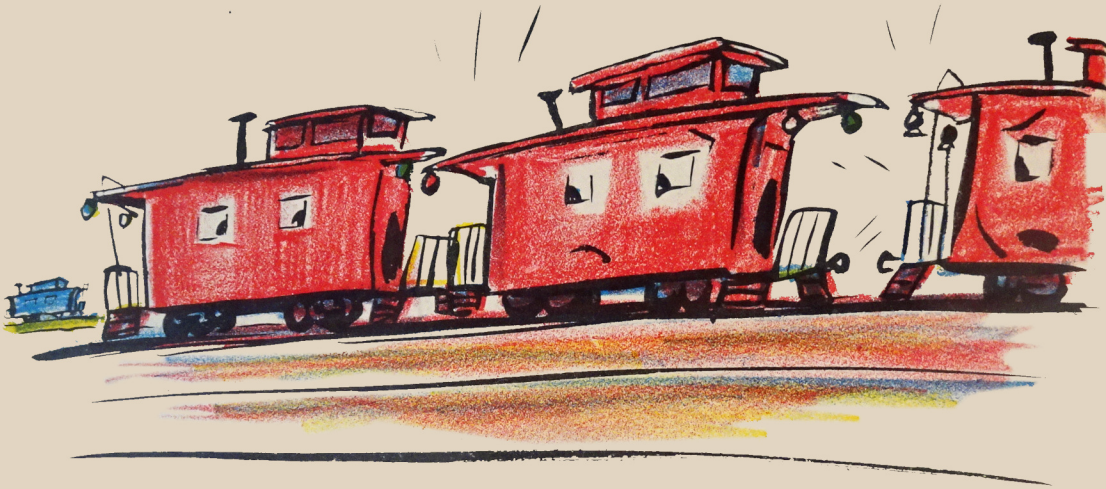


Once there was a little Blue Caboose which was hardly ever in use. The reason this little caboose was blue was because long years before it had been used as an end-car to a circus train. One day how ever, this little caboose came loose from the rest of the circus train and was left standing alone on a side-track—

near this busy railroad yard.



All the other cabooses in the busy railroad yard were painted Tuscan red. When they went past the little Blue Caboose they always turned up their noses.



And whenever these red cabooses got together on one track you could hear them gossiping. "Whoever heard of a caboose being blue!" they would whisper. "Look at us. We come from a long line of freight cars, and she comes from only a short circus train!"

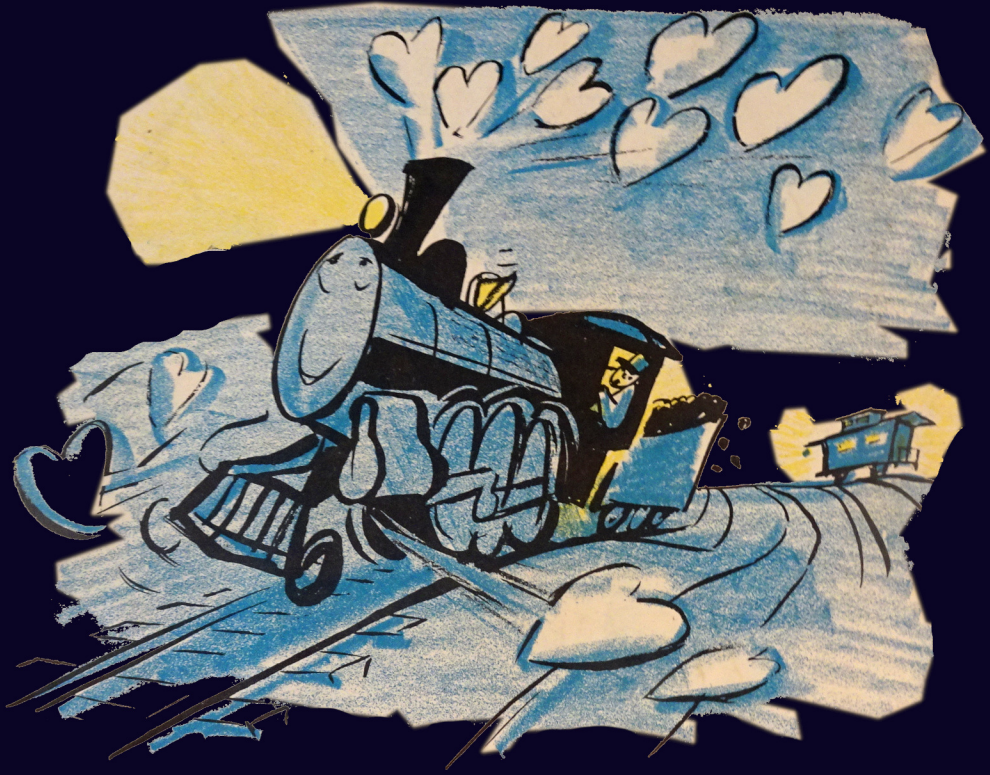
But no matter what the red cabooses said or thought, the little Blue Caboose had at least one good friend in the busv railroad yard, and this was Chuggy, the little engine who lived here in this roundhouse.

Chuggy felt lonely too, just the same as the little Blue Caboose, even though he was very much in use. He worked hard all night long, switching, hitching, pushing, and pulling freight cars, while the big engines were fast asleep inside the roundhouse.

To tell the truth, Chuggy had seen more service on the railroad than all the other engines put together. Once, years before, he had even been a snowplower high up in the Rocky Mountains. But the big engines like Loco Louie and Dan Diesel thought that Chuggy was old-fashioned and useless.

Each night when Chuggy went out into the yard to switch, hitch, push, and pull he would be sure to flash his headlight at the lonely little caboose over on the siding. Then—

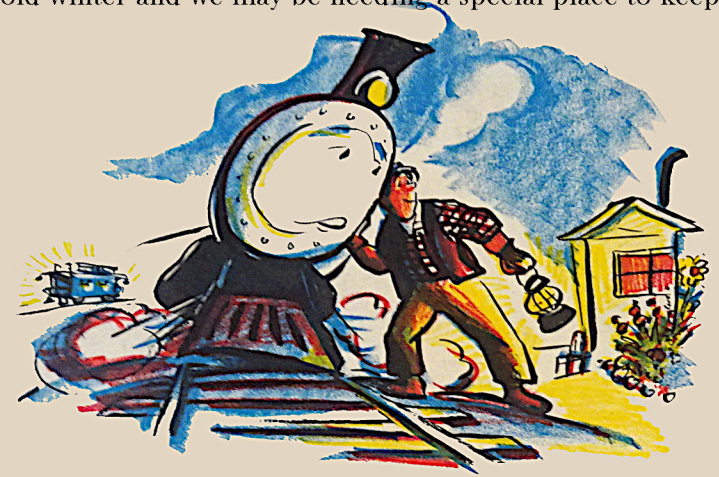
one bright moonlight night something wonderful happened. What should he see across the yard but the little Blue Caboose all lit up for the first time! And when he turned his headlight on her she actually blinked back.



As you might expect, this made Chuggy feel so happy that he went chugging down the track lickety-split.

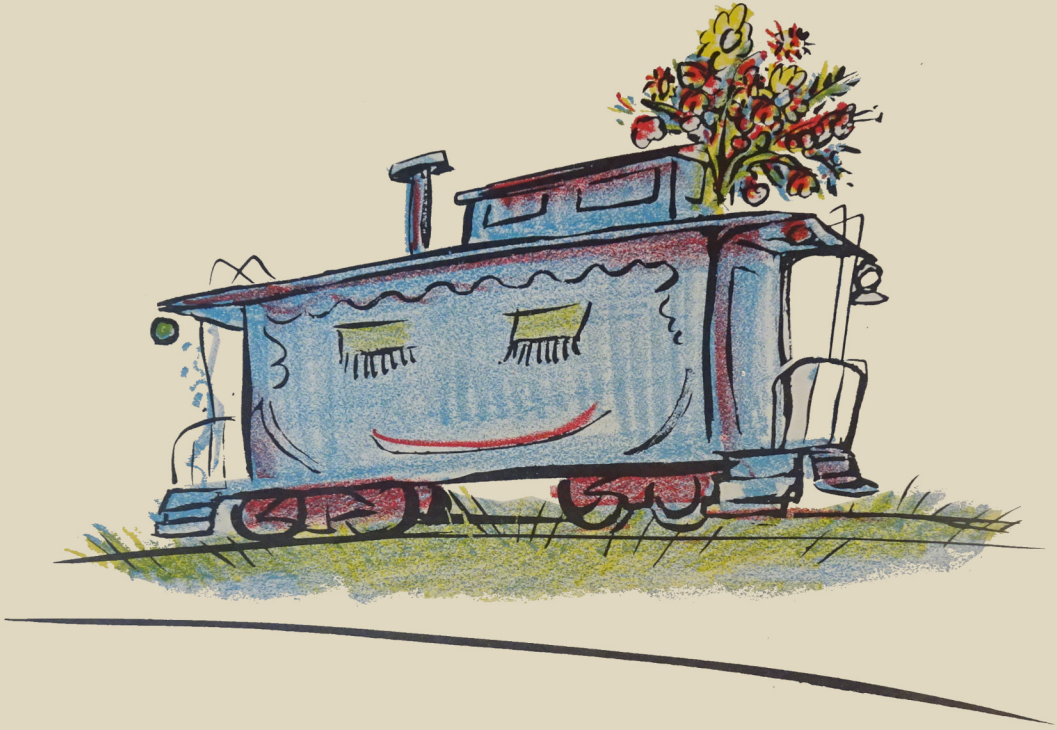
In a minute he was on the way to visit his old pal Mitch the Switchman, who kept a garden by his trackside shack. Chuggy wanted to ask Mitch why the caboose on the siding had all her lights lit.

"Oh, you mean Lucy the Blue Caboose!" Said Mitch. "Well, sir, we switchmen are fixing her up to use as a sort of club car. We're putting in a stove, some chairs, and a table. They say it's going to be a pretty cold winter and we may be needing a special place to keep warm."



Chuggy could hardly believe his gears, he was so happy. "Then will you do me a favor?" Chuggy steamed. "Please give Lucy a bouquet of your finest flowers for me." "Certainly!" said Mitch. "But I have only a few batchelor's-buttons and sunflowers left. It's rather late in the fall for flowers, you know, but I'll do my best!"

That morning when Chuggy went back to the roundhouse he slept sounder than he had for many a sun.



And see what Lucy looked like with flowers in her hat!

Now when the slick silver streamliner whizzed past every afternoon he hooted his horn at her rudely. "Wooooo-wooooo!" he hooted.

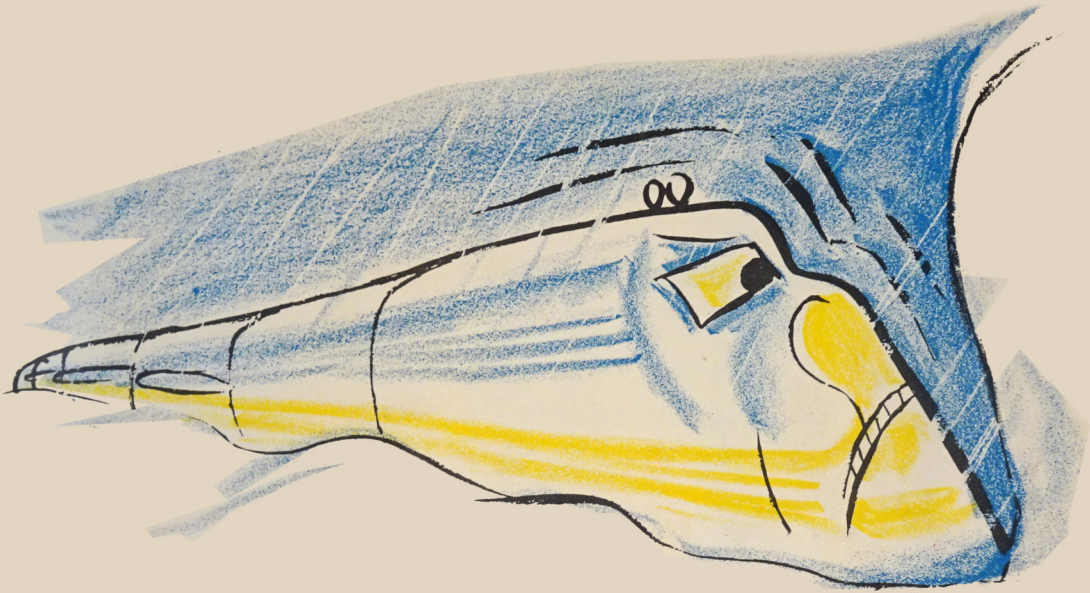
Not long afterward winter suddenly came, with fury and force and snowflakes. Just see what the first blizzard did to poor Lucy and her fancy bouquet.

Gradually the thick white snow began to cover everything in the whole railroad yard—everything, even the Tuscan-red cabooses and their long lines of freight cars. The big strong locomotives, too, were stopped cold in their tracks.

This was the worst snowstorm the yard had ever known! But no matter how hard it snowed, one track had to be kept clear. That was the track on which the slick silver streamliner was due to come. Everybody worked to shovel away the snow.

All at once Mitch the Switchman called out, "Clear the track! Clear the track! Streamliner ahead!"

The streamliner came streaking along, pushing aside the walls of snow as he came, until—



GLUG! He hit a snowbank twice as high as himself, and there he stayed, stuck fast. He could not budge.

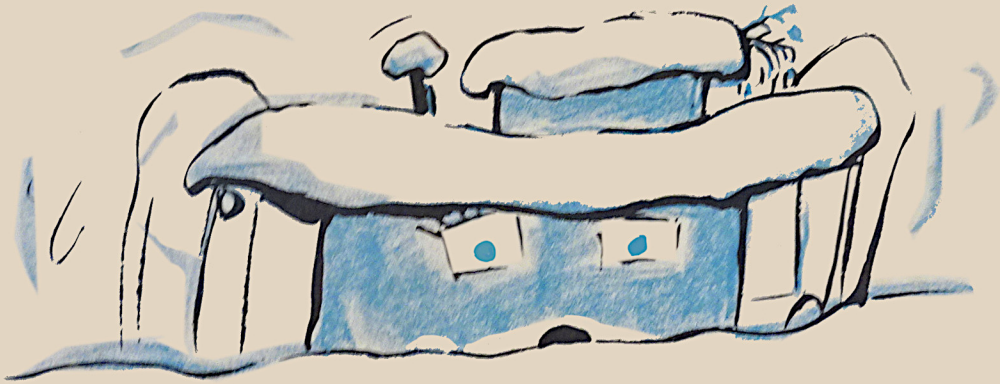
"Help, help!" he cried.

All the rairoad workers ran to the rescue, but just as fast as they shoveled off the snow more snow piled up on top. The mighty steamliner was getting paler and paler by the minute and slowly disappearing.

The conductor of the stuck streamliner dug himself out and shouted at the engineers who belonged to the yard. "You men have got to get us out of here in a hurry! We have never been late in our life, and we *must* be on time today. No excuses! You'll have to find some way to get us through!"

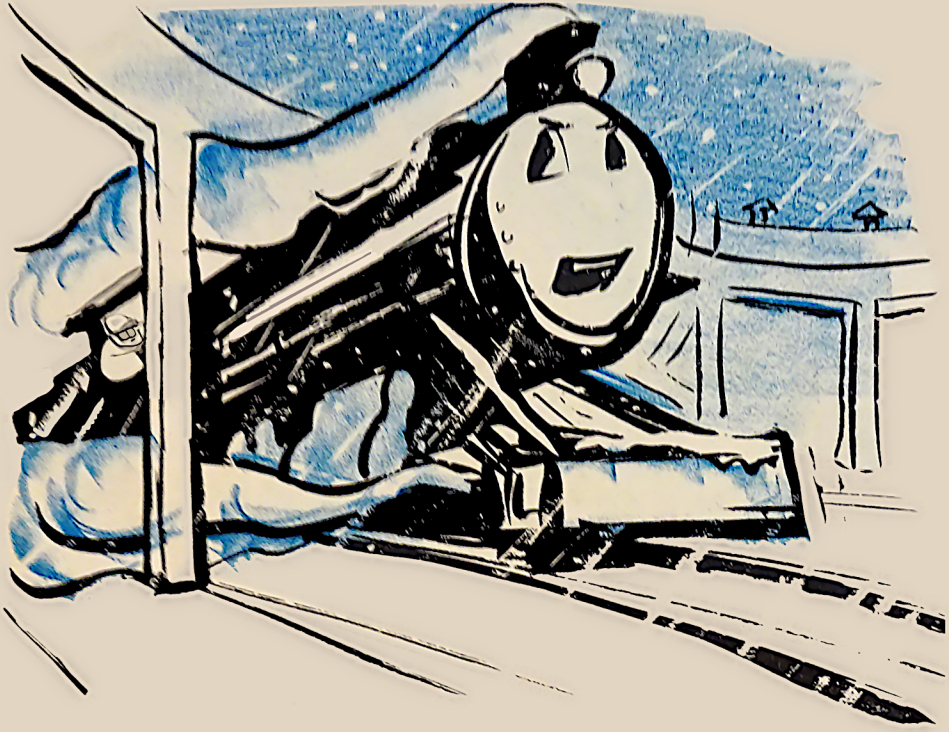
"But all our engines are frozen stiff," explained the yard captain. "There's absolutely nothing we can do until the snow stops!"

"Stops!" screamed the conductor. "This snow won't stop for days! You'd better do something quick if you know what's good for you!"

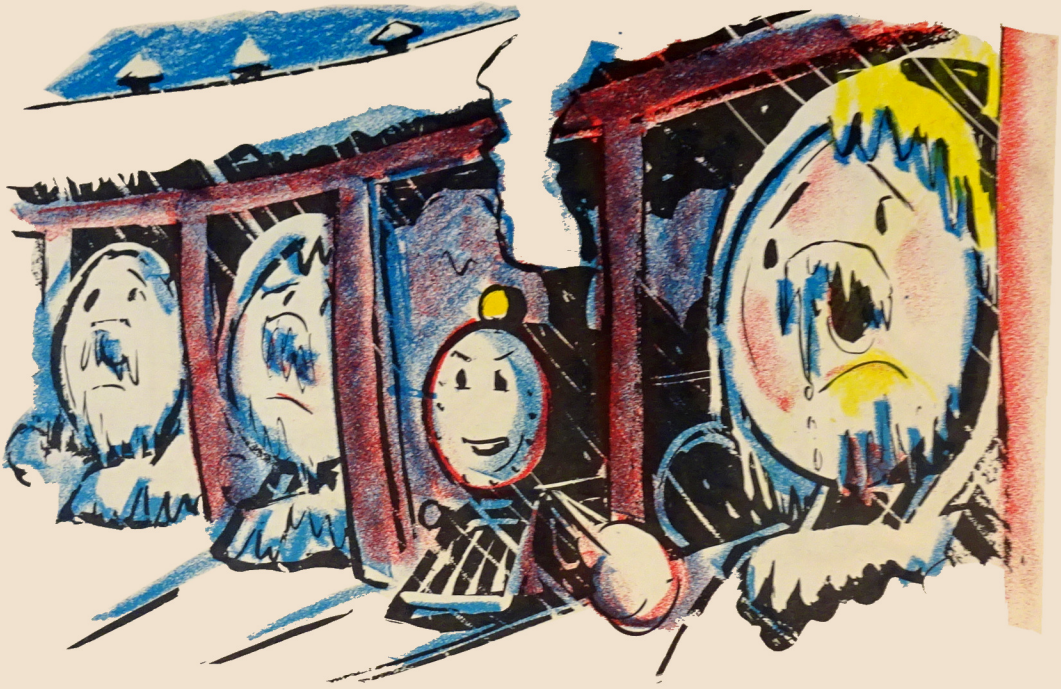


Just then Lucy the Blue Caboose shook herself loose from a snowdrift and sneezed. "Get Chuggy! Get Chuggy! Get-Choooo!"

"She's right!" yelled Mitch the Switchman. "Our Lucy's right! Let's get Chuggy. He used to be a snowplower up in the Rockies!"



As a matter of fact, Chuggy was already set and rarin' to go at that very minute. His snowplow was hooked on and his furnace fired up.



All the other engines stayed behind and shivered as they watched Chuggy pull out of the roundhouse

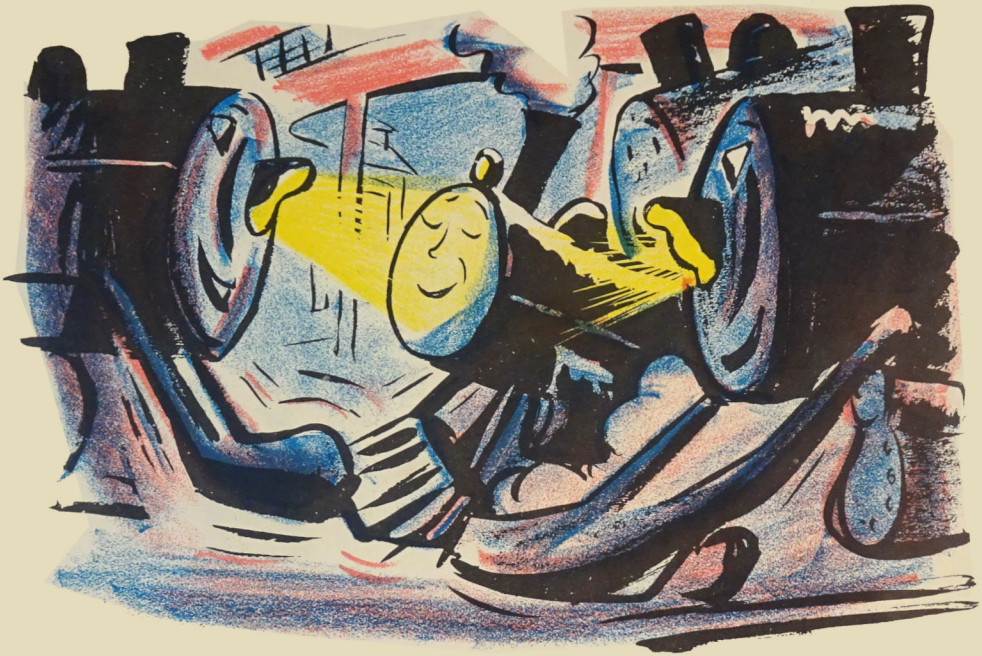
There he goes! A nod from Lucy was all he needed. Nothing could stop him now!

Everybody ran to see brave Chuggy pitching and pushing away the snowdrifts. In a jiffy or two he had completely cleared the track and was face to face with the streamliner!

"Hooray! Hooray!"

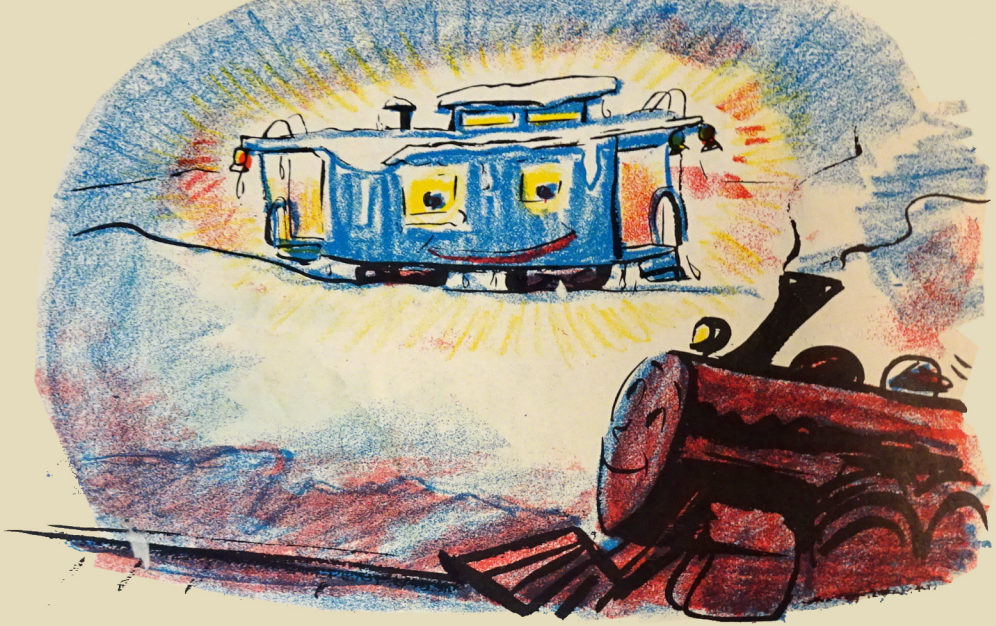
Although the surprised streamliner felt a bit embarrassed about being saved by such a little old-fashioned out-of-date engine, he also tooted, "Hooray!" in gratitude.

Then away he whizzed, down the track and out of sight.

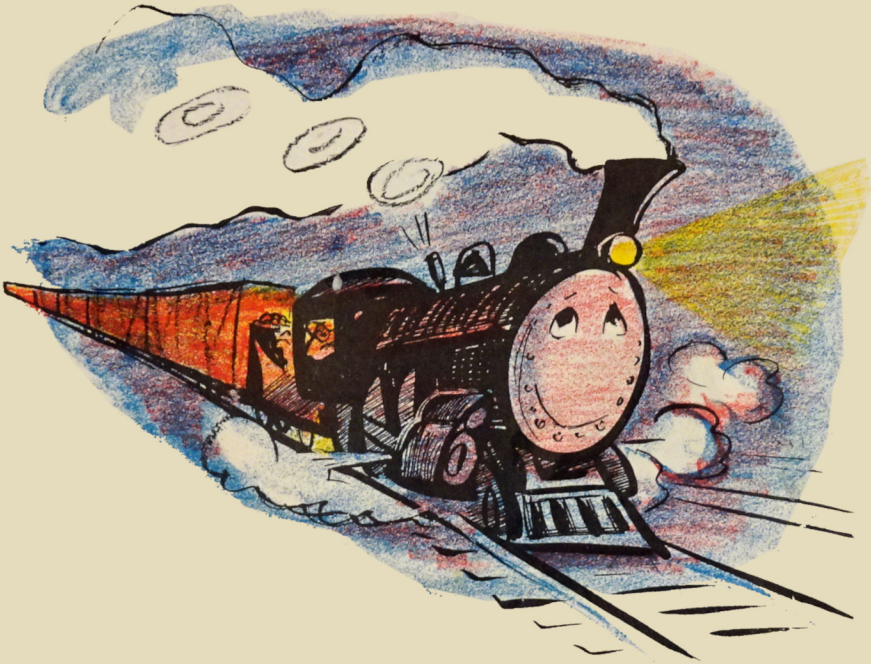


Back inside the roundhouse that night, after the snowstorm had stopped, the big engines crowded around Chuggy. Loco Louie stepped forward and said, "Congratulations, Chuggy, my boy! Let me be the first to shake your fender!"

Outside in the cold yard, Lucy wondered if the switchmen had forgotten about her.



But of course they hadn't forgotten! Around midnight, when Chuggy came out, the switchmen were all inside the warm caboose. They celebrated by making up songs about how their Chuggy had saved the day for the whole railroad yard. But can you guess what Chuggy did?



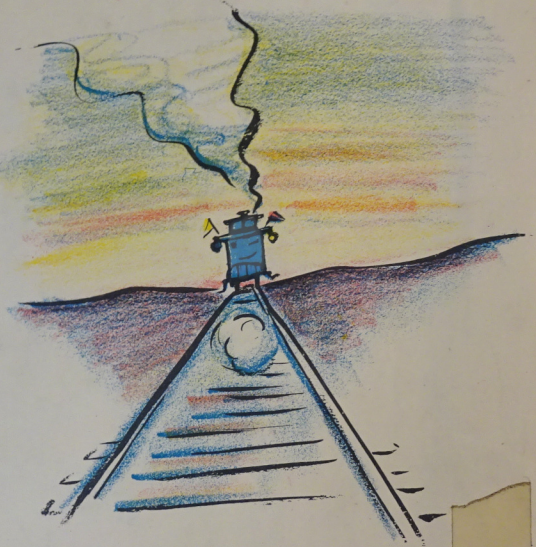
He went right on with his work, hitching, switching, pushing, and pulling freight cars! And yet he went with a light heart and a secret —a secret his pal Mitch the Switchman had told him. It seems Mitch knew of a wonderful Happy-Go-Lucky circus that needed an engine and also a Blue Caboose!

So several nights later, just as soon as he could, Chuggy switched onto the siding and puffed the question to you-know-who. He asked Lucy if she cared to join a circus with him in the spring. And would she? She would!

Finally the great day arrived. It was the first day of spring, and bright and early in the morning off they went to find the Happy-Go-Lucky circus. Naturally Mitch came along to see that they got off on the right track!

After searching for many days, they found the Happy-Go-Luckiest circus train you ever did see. All the clowns and animals and acrobats welcomed them both as part of the family.

From town to town they all traveled, bringing fun and frolic to children everywhere. So no wonder they say that Chuggy and the Blue Caboose chugged on happily ever after.



The end.